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UNCLAS YEREVAN 000086

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/CACEN

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: ARMENIAN CONTINGENT DEPARTS FOR IRAQ

1. On January 18, a 46-man contingent departed Armenia to serve with coalition forces in Iraq. The Armenian troops, consisting mostly of truck drivers, will work with Polish forces currently stationed in Iraq. The Armenian media covered the departure in a mostly positive light (septel), and the Armenian Defense Minister joined the Ambassador in attending the brief sendoff. The Armenian National Assembly authorized the deployment December 24. The Armenians will arrive in Iraq following a brief period in Kuwait.

2. During a January 19 meeting with the Ambassador on a different issue, Defense Minister Serzh Sargsian said that the first reports from the contingent after arrival in Kuwait had all been positive.

EVANS